1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Otway[3] describes the weavers of Drogheda in 1840 subsisting on conacre gardens (plots hired without right other than to the current crop) in circumstances of dire poverty.

O'Brien sums up his *Economic History* by concluding that the result of the first fifty years of the nineteenth century was that Ireland abandoned all pretense of being an industrial country and came to rely on agriculture to a greater extent than at any time formerly and even than in the eighteenth century. The accounts of Ireland at the time of the famine and after it bear him out. They show a very great lack of any kind of industrial activity other than agriculture.

The petty crafts of the countryside, which never gave any promise of reaching industrial proportions as those in the town centers might have, suffered a similar decline. But with them the decline seems to have come later and to have been part of the general change brought by the industrial revolution. All the supply crafts of the countryside have now come to be concentrated in the market towns. Nevertheless, through western regions, at least, local craftsmen, often with garden plots to help them eke out a living, seem to have long continued to be part of the local scene. In the novels of Carleton written just before and after the famine, many local shoemakers, cobblers, weavers, carpenters, smiths, coopers, nailers, and other followers of small trades appear. Upon them, the agricultural population depended for much of its tools and goods for local consumption. It is impossible to determine now how many of these were rural, since censuses of occupations before 1926 do not distinguish occupations in towns from those in country districts. But these men were part of the generally greater proportions of country dwellers before the rise of towns and the opening up of the railroads during the last century.

[3] Caesar Otway, *A Tour in Connaught* (Dublin: W. Curry, Jr., & Company, 1839).

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Another very great occupational change, though it does not show itself in any great numbers in census records, has been connected with the disappearance of the landlord from the western counties. A whole series of occupations clustering around the management of estates or the tastes of the local gentry and their families has gradually disappeared. Even the adoption of many of the conventions and habits, once exclusive marks of the Ascendancy, by other classes of the population has not served to stem the change.

If we fasten our attention directly upon determining what occupations are characteristically found represented in the countryside rather than in the towns in Ireland today, we get a picture of rural economy in which the followers of other occupations than farming are few indeed in the countryside. The occupations predominantly rural in Ireland are nearly exclusively those of farm ownership or farm labor. Only in recent years has there been any further development of rural pursuits to take the place of those going out with the changes brought about by modern communication and distribution of factory-made products. The chief of the new influences is not yet represented in full, even in the census of 1926. It is too recent a development. The introduction of creameries had not yet made its mark in that year. Plans for industrialization, since undertaken by the De Valera regime, had not yet even been drawn up.

To get a picture of rural life and the view of technological adaptation which it entails, we can look through the figures for a comparison of urban and rural industry in the years of the study.

Volume VI of the Irish census of population of 1926 entitled "Industrial Status" gives a view of the industries of the whole country and a preliminary view of the chief forms of industrial organization. Though the volume is largely concerned with unemployment, it also contains tables which classify those at work in the Free State accord-

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

423 311 to give by the kindness of the proprietor, Cyril Allies, Esq., J. P. :—

Townland.	Area.	Commonage.
	A. R. P.	A. R. P.
Westquarter, ...	493 3 32	349 2 8
Fawnmore, ...	194 1 14	116 1 15
Middlequarter, . . .	612 2 0	375 3 9
Knock, ...	366 1 9	161 3 39
Cloonamore, ...	645 1 1	424 3 29
Inishshark, ...	581 1 12	435 3 12
Islets, ...	257 3 35	—
Total, . . .	3151 3 1	1864 1 32

Taking the available area at 930 acres, and the number of families at 215, the average size of a holding per house is 4·3 acres, with a corresponding average valuation of £2 13*s*. The size of a holding, however, varies from 1A. 3R., at a rent of 14*s*. 6*d*., to 56 acres, at £7. Out of 127, the particulars of which were furnished me by Mr. Allies, there were :— [435] [427]

3	holdings of	1	acre and under	2	acres.
21	,,	2	,,	3	,,
17	,,	3	,,	4	,,
8	,,	4	,,	5	,,
23	,,	5	,,	6	,,
15	,,	6	,,	7	,,
12	,,	7	,,	8	,,
17	,,	8	,,	10	,,
5	,,	10	,,	13	,,
4	,,	13	,,	18	,,
1	holding of	25	acres		
1	,,	56	,,		

It will be observed that most of the holdings in this list are of very small size, only eleven being more than ten acres in extent, and 59 or 46·5 per cent. being under 5 acres.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

on this subject, I shall not attempt the treatment of it myself, but shall quote the opinion of the Rev. Eugene O'Growney, who has an exceptional knowledge of both people and language, and has kindly furnished me with some of his notes relating to them. He says:— "The Irish spoken in Boffin has a very poor vocabulary, as far as I heard it spoken. I must say, however, that it was not easy to get the people to speak it, and many children at first refused point blank to utter a word of Irish. In most of the Irish-speaking districts of the west, the people have preserved a number of old poetic prayers and hymns. Many of these are very beautiful, and some appear to be of great age. I was particularly interested at the time of my visit in these hymns, but was told that the only hymn in use in Boffin and Shark was the *ortha Mhuire*, or prayer of Mary. I could not find any person in Boffin who could recite it, and the only person in Shark who was supposed to have it in full was out at sea. An old man in Boffin recited for me a portion of a quaint old religious composition in English." In another place he states that the people speak neither English nor Irish well, their dialect of the language containing many corrupted English words, and at least one curious word. "I recollect that the cove in which St. Leo's well is situated is called *fuath Leo*. I take the word *fuath*, which is the usual word in Inishshark and Inisboffin for a 'cove,' to be a corruption of *uamh*, which is used by the Four Masters in the year 893 as meaning 'cave.'"[1]

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[538]

IV. SOCIOLOGY.

1. *Occupations.*—Every family combines fishing and farming, and has some share in a boat. The farms are small (see p. 340), about three acres and a-half under potatoes and oats, being about the average amount of tillage per family. All are held direct from the landlord, who resides on Inishbofin, there being no subletting or con-acre. The rents average about £2 per holding, but vary much according to the extent and quality of the land.

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[226]
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The holdings are not divided up into small fields, as in Aran, but are often insufficiently fenced, allowing the cattle to stray, which

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[1] The Rev. E. A. Lavelle has, since the above was written, sent a translation of a curious old Irish litany used on both islands, both in Irish and English, which he obtained from an old man, aged 84, whose father, Peter Lavelle, fought under Nelson at Trafalgar. As the litany is in English and of great length, it is not inserted here, but it is to be hoped that the Irish form will be recorded and preserved as it may possess the linguistic value wanting in a translation.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

The distribution of population, inhabited houses, and outbuildings was as follows in 1891 :—

Locality.	Area.	Population.			Houses.	Outbuildings and Farmsteadings.
		Persons.	Males.	Females.		
	A. R. P.					
The Mullet, .	23,333 1 27	3767	1893	1864	600	532
N. Inishkea, .	464 1 32	126	60	66	21	4
S. Inishkea, . .	344 3 19	180	92	88	32	33
23 Islets, . .	350 0 17	48	22	26	10	27
Portacloy, .	7845 1 1	299	148	151	54	29
Totals, . . .	32,338 0 6	410	2215	2195	717	625

(B.) *Acreage and Rental.*—The total area of the district is that of Kilmore, being 29,492 acres, and the three townlands forming the Portacloy district, 7,845 acres.

The total valuation of Kilmore is £4,055 18*s.*, and of Portacloy £163 7*s.*

There is very little commonage in the Mullet, but about Portacloy there is a good deal.

The holdings are not large, averaging about 4½ or 5 acres at a rental of about £3 10*s.* in the Mullet, and about £2 10*s.* in "the mountains." There is considerable variation, however, as there are some farms of good size, but the majority are small.

In 1891 there were, in Kilmore, 210 holdings of between £4 and £10 valuation, 305 of £2 and under £4, and no less than 252 at, or under, £2 valuation.

The land is mostly held now at judicial rentals (the people having early taken advantage of the Land Act of 1881), but sixty years ago the greater part of the land was held in common, and the mode of tenure is thus described by Knight :—"In the whole of the peninsula there are few farms divided . . . the usual system being commonage both in tillage and pasture. In tillage, lots are cast every third year for the number of ridges each person is entitled to after the usual rotation is over. Potatoes the first year, then barley or oats, after which new lots must be cast for new potato ground. The holdings are by sums or collops, which originally meant the number

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

combined knife and drag found in Connacht has three heavy hooks attached to a strong sickle-shaped blade mounted on a 12-ft. pole (Fig. 73). Powerful long-handled scythes and great hand-rakes with teeth a foot long were used on the south coast. In Donegal the men would wield their long knives from curraghs while the women dragged the weed ashore.

In the Rosses of west Donegal around 1750 the rents were paid in kelp: any surplus was bartered for 'the two luxuries, spirits and tobacco, enjoyed by men and women alike.'[1] For the lesser weeds growing in shallow water ordinary sickles were employed when the tide was low, but these species made inferior kelp. Yet in some areas, for example Strangford Lough, stones were planted on the shore to grow wrack for kelp burning: Arthur Young commented on this practice in 1776.[2] Old seaweed beds may be seen also in Lough Swilly, Clew Bay, Achill Sound and probably elsewhere.

Today the most remarkable area of cultivated weed is near the mouth of Carlingford Lough in County Down, where at low tide a wide stretch of mud and sand is exposed in Mill Bay. It is grown solely to supply fertilizer for the potato crop. Wrack rights are mentioned in grants of land in County Down as far back as 1506, but the earliest reference I have found to the cultivated weed in Carlingford Lough is in a guidebook of 1846. As we have seen, however, Arthur Young refers to the growing of wrack for kelp-burning in Strangford Lough, and since the best species for kelp grow in deeper water the planting of seaweed beds is not likely to have originated with the kelp industry. Through the second half of last century some 1,100 beds, covering well over a square mile in area, were maintained in Mill Bay, and it was not until the depression between the two world wars that they began to be neglected. Today the use of wrack has almost entirely given way to artificial fertilizers, with a great easement of labour but a loss of annually renewed organic matter in the soil. The wrackbeds, or 'plans', are half-acre rectangles set with rows of boulders a foot or so in diameter, but many beds are subdivided into small 'cuts' for sub-letting, and the Estate Map showing the beds has the

[1] A. B., *The Rosses in 1753*, 201.
[2] A. Young, *Tour*, 1, 194.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

as they are called, were born in the mountain country of Slieve Gullion in Co. Armagh, adjoining the rich plains of the Pale where their ancestors sharpened their wits on the English settlers. Many stories are told of the tricks by which 'the goatmen' disposed of their animals before they reached their goal at Barnet Fair, of billy-goats sold to the innocent English as good milkers or as an infallible means of keeping a garden free of weeds. 'Every guy who comes here selling cloth', said a Canadian rancher, 'tells me he is from Slieve Gullion. It must be some city.'

Although the export of live cattle from Ireland was prohibited, in the interests of British farming, through most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the short sea-crossings from north-east Ireland enabled dealers to ship them to southern Scotland. The embargo was lifted in 1765, and by the early nineteenth century many thousands of cattle were reaching Portpatrick and being driven to the fairs at Dumfries and Carlisle, and farther afield to Barnet in Hertfordshire and St. Faith's near Norwich. Many Irish harvesters and other summer migrants followed the trails trodden by Irish cattle and their drovers, but after 1830, with the coming of the steamship, Glasgow, the Mersey and Holyhead became, as they remain, the chief points of entry for both animals and men.

Before the agrarian revolution and the import of feeding stuffs made it possible to keep stock through the winter, the months of October and November were critical for the farmer, who had to dispose of many of his animals at this time. The trade is now better distributed through the year, but although monthly fairs have become general since the famine, the sales vary a good deal from month to month, and the important fairs still fall at the turning points of the pastoral year, particularly in May and November. The spring fairs of February and March and the Lammas fairs of July and August were to a large extent concerned respectively with horses and with sheep and wool, but those of May and November were the great cattle fairs and also the hiring fairs. We are reminded that the Celtic year in pre-Christian times had only two seasons, winter and summer, and that the first days of November and May are still the Irish gale-days, the times when rents fall due.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Coast guard personnel first were assigned to Inis Beag shortly after the lighthouse was built. Three guardsmen and their families lived in private dwellings in Terrace Village until the large station was erected after 1883 in Low Village, following which the contingent was enlarged to four men. The two-story structure contains four apartments, and these housed the families of the personnel until 1922. Now owned by the Irish Land Commission, two apartments are rented by islanders who sublet them to visitors; a third accommodates the nurse; and the other has been converted into a government sponsored knitting "factory" which employs local girls. One of the several outbuildings of the station contains the breeches buoy apparatus of the Coast Life Saving Service. The life saving company is composed of 15 Inis Beag men, hired and supervised by a branch of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and was responsible for the rescue of the freighter's crew in 1960—its only rescue operation since being formed almost 60 years ago. A boathouse was erected on the strand by the coast guard company, and now it serves as an all-purpose building: dance hall, trade school, storage house, and meeting place.

Health services are provided the folk by a nurse, a doctor who lives in a neighboring island, and medical and dental personnel from the mainland who visit the island occasionally for specific examination and treatment purposes. A much renowned mainland woman who lived in Inis Beag intermittently between 1903 and 1923 (and wrote a book about her experiences) was the first nurse to serve the islanders; but since 1932, the Lady Dudley Nursing Scheme of Dublin has maintained "Jubilee Nurses" in Inis Beag continuously, each one serving from one to five years. The nurse is responsible to the doctor, from whom she obtains medicines furnished by the county council, and handles most of the medical cases which arise. Bedridden patients and women who are secretive about their ailments are visited by her during two daily rounds, while after dark she is visited by other patients, mostly men, who are also secretive about their infirmities, and she may be called out on emergencies. The doctor comes to Inis Beag once a month and visits the seriously ill accompanied by the nurse, and in the case of emergencies at other times which cannot be taken care of by her, he is brought over in the lifeboat of the Coast Life Saving Service at her summons.

The post office in High Village is an adjunct to the house of its supervisor, just as the shops are to the homes of their proprietors. The office is a small room with a counter, separating the clerk and her desk and switchboard from those who do business there, and a telephone booth. A radio telephone serves the island and can be used between nine o'clock in the morning and six at night. A line runs to the house of "Number One" of the life saving company, which he alone can use in matters pertaining to the service during the prescribed hours. When the freighter ran aground before dawn, it was discovered by islanders who informed the company; Radio Eireann reported the plight of the vessel, on the basis of S.O.S. messages, in the seven o'clock news, but the company had reached the reef before the telephone was available.

Inis Beag has only a small church, known as the "chapel." After the church of the patron saint was abandoned, a house served as the place of worship for a time, then was superseded by the old chapel whose foundations can be discerned

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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829 come ashore in the future, for his use of the term poverty when describing Inis Beag life in a series of articles. The islanders, however, constantly complain of their indigence privately and deprecate it and are embarrassed by it in the presence of strangers. Girls and young women are particularly disparaging, and elders are puzzled by this attitude because the lot of youth is so much easier than was that of their mothers and grandmothers. Those persons who extol island existence usually do so in a defensive manner; after conceding that goods are in short supply, albeit "no one suffers from want of food or clothing," they go on to stress the healthy climate of the island, the freedom and independence that they enjoy, the sanctity of Inis Beag and its many saints of the past, and the strength of Catholic belief. Sometimes the advocate is followed by a denunciation of urban life, where these essential characteristics are lacking, or by a recounting of the difficulties being encountered by a relative just arrived in Boston or London.

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233 The subsistence economy of Inis Beag always has been dominated by agricultural pursuits, contrary to frequent assertions by writers that farming was subsidiary to fishing two generations ago. Most householders own land on which they grow potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes sally rods, and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and asses. Potatoes are the staple crop, and after they are harvested the land usually is seeded with grass and used as pasturage for a number of years before being replanted. Indigenous soils bearing grass at the back of the island also serve as pasturage, and horses and asses at times
[262] are permitted to roam the trails and common land to forage whatever they can from the meager flora there. Supplementing potatoes in the diet are various vegetables, milk from cows and nanny goats, meat from island sheep and poultry,
[342] fish, and other foods, many of which are imported and sold in the shops. Rye is
[343] grown for thatching houses and contiguous outbuildings, as well as barns located
[493] south of the terrace crest, and sally rods are used to weave several types of containers. The only vehicles in Inis Beag are three two-wheeled carts employed to transport heavy loads, such as building stones, along the rough and narrow trails. Most householders own asses or horses, often ridden, which carry burdens in baskets
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28 or pull carts. Other subsistence activities are knitting, weaving, crocheting, tailoring, shoemaking, and net making, although the last skill almost has died out.

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[437] A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and sheep reared or fattened in the island and of surplus potatoes, the collection of seaweed for extraction of its iodine content at a mainland factory, the manufacture of
[28] craft objects, and the keeping of tourists in private homes. Among the craft commodities produced are cable-knit sweaters, miniature *curach*, stockings knitted at the local factory in the coast guard station, and articles of clothing worn by the folk—woven belts, cowhide shoes, and shawls. These goods are sold both to visitors
[667] and to middlemen who resell them in Ireland and export them abroad. The cash economy is buttressed considerably by government subsidies of many sorts and
[651] by remittances from emigrant kin. Not only are income and property taxes not
[42] collected in Inis Beag, but rents are extremely low, both of which conditions rep-
[124] resent indirect government subsidization. Income information is as difficult to come by as data concerning pagan supernatural beliefs, disputes, and sexual atti-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

complain about how difficult their new work regime is when compared to the old. Young men are chided by their elders, as well as by their wives, about how much less they labor today than did their forerunners and womenfolk. One of the most popular conversational themes among old men is the contrast between generations—how much stronger and more industrious those of the "hero breed" (a term favored by Mullen [1936] in describing Irish islanders of the past) living half a century ago were than men are nowadays. Women are provoked by how vociferously their spouses complain of the difficulty and endlessness of their labor, and yet how little initiative and industry they exhibit and how often they are idle. "Light work" or no work at all is customary on days when the steamer calls, when it rains heavily, on the day an islander dies and two days afterward, on Sundays and holydays of obligation, and at other times, contrary to the state of affairs which prevailed in the past.

Several men admitted to me their guilt about not working more often and energetically, and told me that many of their fellows "talk big" but do not match their words with deeds. All of them questioned the need for maintaining traditional patterns of labor in light of the many supports to the economy provided by the government. One candid islander suggested that a factory be constructed in Inis Beag which would employ all of the men two to four hours each morning—"Then people would have a steady income and a lot of time off. Now it is hard to get up in the morning and decide what to do, and by noon you are just reaching a decision." An even franker man, of the oldest generation, was unwilling to agree with his peers about how hard they had worked when young. He was willing to acknowledge that now "times are easier," but that when he was a youth men often were idle and were chided by their elders and felt guilty. Interestingly, he was aware of the phenomenon of primitivism, which he described as "the romantic notions writers have about us."

Land Ownership

Inis Beag comprises a townland of four 256-acre quarters, called "carrows." Other land units are the half-quarter, the "cartron" of 64 acres, the half-cartron, the fourth or "croggery" of 16 acres, the half-croggery, the acre, and the three-quarter, half-, and quarter-acre. I have mentioned already that the total acreage of the island is 1440, the strand and common land together make up 200 acres, and the initial division of land among the local inhabitants probably was accomplished by a landlord late in the seventeenth century. Approximately 1000 acres are owned by the Irish Land Commission today and rented to 57 landholders, while two other properties have been purchased from the commission and thus are owned privately. The acreage not accounted for represents shore areas which are useless for agricultural and grazing purposes. Rent is charged according to the fourth and is 5 shillings[1] per year at the present time.

The quarters of Inis Beag extend southward in roughly parallel fashion from the four villages, and each landholder possesses numerous fields, ranging in

[1] A shilling is the equivalent of 14 cents and a pound $2.80 in United States currency.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

size from fourths to quarter-acres, located along the quarter that his community fronts. As a result of past inheritance and purchase, however, five Castle villagers own plots in one or two other quarters, as do five High and two Low villagers. Before field building commenced, the most extensive and fertile soils were found on the terraces; shallow and less widespread soils were situated just south of the terrace crest, while the back of the island was, and still is, mostly limestone pavement. Landholders originally were assigned equal acreage in each of these three areas, so that no one would have an advantage over his neighbors, and this pattern still predominates. The quarters are separated from one another by high, thick stone fences which run almost the length of Inis Beag, and, from west to east, they are known as Quarter of the *Phoillín* (derivation unknown), Quarter of the Ridge of Huts (after an ancient *clochán* settlement behind High Village), Quarter of the Castle, and Quarter of the Lake; they embrace, respectively, 271, 261, 240, and 263 acres.

Fifty-nine of the 71 householders in Inis Beag hold or own land, and one of these is an absentee holder. If an individual possesses four or fewer acres, he is regarded as landless—"a man of few gardens"—and 11 men are so designated. Two as yet unresolved disputes over the possession of land when resolved will add two other householders to the landless category, unless the property is divided in some manner among all four litigants by the Irish Land Commission. The folk prefer to rent rather than to own land, so that the commission will supervise matters relating to inheritance "fairly" and with little cost to the litigants should a dispute arise. The average sized Inis Beag holding is 15.7 acres, or approximately a croggery, and 25 islanders hold this amount of land; in addition, one person has 40 acres, three 32 acres, one 28 acres, eight 24 acres, eight 20 acres, four 12 acres, and nine 8 acres. Below is a chart summing up ownership data by village:

	Landholders and Owners	*Landless Householders*	*Average Sized Holding (in acres)*
Low Village	17	9	11.0
High Village	14	1	18.2
Castle Village	15	2	19.0
Terrace Village	13	1	16.4

The disproportionate number of landless persons in Low are, for the most part, either descendants of fisherfolk who centered in that community in earlier times and did not possess land, or siblings of landholders who chose not to emigrate. They support themselves by craft work, keeping tourists, fishing, managing shops, and working for the government, among other pursuits.

Farming

There is neither legendary nor historical evidence of when soil building commenced in Inis Beag, but the process is an archaic one and is practiced in other communities along the Atlantic seaboard where appropriate seaweeds are available. Today, between 45 and 50 percent of the land surface of the island is